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Memo From NASA Legislative Affairs: Voluntary Separation Incentive Plan

On December 3, 2004 NASA will announce it's intention to offer buyout and early out opportunities to employees at NASA Centers in positions identified with excess competencies. This comes as part of NASA's effort to transform the agency and better align the agency's workforce for implementation of the Vision for Space Exploration.

The Agency is transforming both its organizational structure and its workforce composition in response to a number of factors, including the Columbia Accident Investigation Board and the Stafford-Covey Commission. A shift in the future mission focus also is having an impact on the composition of the workforce. Some program areas have decreased emphasis, while other have increased emphasis to align strategically with major program and mission needs.

NASA performed a comprehensive workforce review that began in early 2003, and continues to evolve today. With the help of NASA's Competency Management System (CMS), managers determine what skills they will need to staff missions and programs, analyze skills inherent in the workforce, and determine where there may be gaps. This process allows managers to rebalance where needed, and plan for future staffing needs.

As a result of the changing emphasis and process of reorganization and skills-gap analysis, NASA has identified numerous excess competency areas, as well as a need to acquire different skills in a number of areas. The effort to rebalance these skills will take a number of forms, including natural attrition, retraining, realigning or redistributing work, and reassignments both within and across organizations. Voluntary separation incentives are needed to help the Agency to staff its workforce with individuals with competencies aligned to mission needs.

The Office of Personnel Management, in consultation with the Office of Management and Budget, has approved specific incentive plans for NASA's Ames Research Center at Moffett Field, California; Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia; Glenn Research Center in Cleveland and Sandusky, Ohio; Dryden Flight Research Center at Edwards, California; and Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. A brief summary of the incentive program planned at each Center is enclosed. To support rebalancing at these Centers, incentives also may be offered at any NASA location to create placements for employees in excess competency areas. Incentives will be concentrated in the December 2004 - January 2005 timeframe, but could continue as needed throughout fiscal year 2006.

Please do not hesitate to call us if you have any questions.

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Enclosure 1: Summary of Buyout/Early Retirement Plan for FY 2005 - 2006 for NASA Ames Research Center

Ames has conducted a comprehensive, strategic review of its human capital to identify the critical competencies needed to support new NASA strategies, program priorities, and budgetary limitations. This review indicated a need to rebalance the Center's workforce to align with the current NASA Exploration mission, vision, and strategy. Changes in programmatic direction include:

- Reduced budgetary resources to support computational physics, computation chemistry, information computing grid research, and fundamental computing architecture;
- Shifting emphasis away from traditional aeronautical research to new information science technologies (such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, integrated systems health management, and robotics) and science initiatives (such as astrobiology and fundamental space biology); and
- Reduced demand for wind tunnel testing and operations and manufacturing.

Immediate plans are to offer 374 buyout/early retirement opportunities in December 2004 – January 2005.

Enclosure 2: Summary of Buyout/Early Retirement Plan for FY 2005-2006 for NASA Langley Research Center (LaRC)

To streamline operations, effect efficiencies, and better align with the Agency focus, a new LaRC organization structure has been implemented. This new organization structure also will decrease the requirement for certain skills and workforce competencies. Through consolidation, Langley will be able to reduce end-state administrative overhead requirements by 20 percent.

In addition, the Center also is positioning itself to support future space science mission opportunities. LaRC plans to utilize its expertise in space, aeronautics, and systems analysis to contribute to the success of these endeavors. However, this new focus also has highlighted skill areas outside this core vision that need to be redefined, reduced, or eliminated.

To support these new and evolving programs and priorities, LaRC must fill positions in several key core capability areas, especially unique scientific/research areas and specialized technical/engineering disciplines. Critical skills that have been identified include:

- systems engineering;
- advanced experimentation and testing techniques;
- aerodynamics

Therefore, LaRC faces FY 2005 with increasing demands and a clear need to manage surplus and outdated skills. In addition, LaRC faces significant full-time equivalent (FTE) reductions in FY 2005 that compound the need for a buyout. Without the

availability of workforce restructuring tools, such as voluntary separation incentives (buyouts) and early retirements to manage surplus and outdated skills, LaRC may be unable to acquire the skills necessary to support its program requirements and also may be unable to meet its FY 2005 FTE ceiling.

To provide optimal utilization of its available resources, LaRC needs to implement a buyout/early retirement program in FY 2005. The overall objective is to bring existing skill sets into a better balance with the continuing need for that skill.

Immediate plans are to offer 300 buyout/early retirement opportunities for December 2004 - January 2005.

Enclosure 3: Summary of Buyout/Early Retirement Plan for FY 2005 - 2006 for NASA Glenn Research Center (GRC)

During the past year, GRC conducted a comprehensive, strategic review of its human capital to identify the competencies needed to support new and changing NASA strategies and program priorities. The primary objective of this buyout plan is to facilitate a rightsizing and rebalancing of skills to better position the Center to be more competitive and to play a significant role in support of the Agency mission. This plan enables the Center's transformation to begin immediately to address current and projected staffing needs. Changes in programmatic direction at Glenn include:

- Shifting emphasis to new communications, networks and engineering; bioengineering, advanced in-space propulsion, microwave systems, computer systems and engineering, nuclear engineering, and power systems advancements conducive to aligning with or supporting sustained and affordable human and robotic efforts in exploring the solar system and beyond, possible propulsion advances, solar cell research, and icing-related research; and
- Targeting the buyout at selective competencies not required to support the Agency mission.

The Center needs to use all available workforce restructuring tools, including reassignments, retraining, retirement incentives and inter-center transfers, to address its workforce surplus in areas of decreased emphasis. A critical part of the rebalancing plan is to offer buyouts. It is anticipated that further retirement and separation incentives may be necessary in FY 2006, into FY 2007, and perhaps beyond, to ensure that Glenn is able to continue to fill critical competency gaps.

Immediate plans are to offer 148 buyout/early retirement opportunities in December 2004 – January 2005.

Enclosure 4: Summary of Buyout/Early Retirement Plan for FY 2005 – 2006 for NASA Dryden Flight Research Center (DFRC)

The recent human capital review performed at the Center indicated a need to rebalance DFRC's workforce to align with the current NASA mission. Changes in programmatic direction include:

- A more defined role in experimental aeronautical research programs, to include revolutionary aviation and aerospace technology;
- An increased role in the development and testing of advanced space transportation vehicles;
- A growing requirement for safety and mission assurance programs; and
- A reduction in the number of research vehicles requiring maintenance.

Dryden needs to fill positions in test engineering, systems engineering, integration engineering, design and development engineering, safety engineering and assurance, quality engineering and assurance, mission assurance, institutional and research facilities planning and operations, and project management. Buyout incentives to create hiring opportunities in these areas are critical to the Center's staffing initiatives.

Immediate plans are to offer 46 buyout/early retirement opportunities for December 2004 - January 2005.

Enclosure 5: Summary of Buyout/Early Retirement Plan for FY 2005 for NASA Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC)

Recently, MSFC completed a strategic workforce review in response to new and evolving NASA strategies and program priorities. The results of this review indicated a need to realign and rebalance the Center's workforce to align with current NASA mission, vision, and strategy. Accordingly, MSFC is implementing an organizational realignment to:

- Provide internal and external organizational clarity;
- Position MSFC to address changing program needs;
- Align with the Independent Technical Authority and other relevant recommendations of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board;
- Enable MSFC to be execution-oriented to provide customer focus for programs and projects;
- Enable clear business decisions;
- Align the organization with Center core capabilities; and
- Strengthen engineering and integration.

This review highlighted several competency areas that could be reduced and a need to fill positions supporting the key core capability areas of space transportation systems development, space systems development and operation, propulsion systems and components development operation, and scientific research and instrument/experiment development and operation. In order to acquire the flexibility to obtain sufficient competencies to support these critical core capability areas, MSFC needs a buyout to reduce a number of competencies.

A buyout also is needed to help address Center FTE and budgetary issues. MSFC faces FY05 with increasing demands and a clear need to manage surplus competencies. A buyout affords the Center the ability to address the capacity issues with minimal disruption to the workforce while allowing a level of limited hiring capability to acquire the skills necessary to support evolving program requirements.

Immediate plans are to offer 250 buyout/early retirement opportunities for December 2004 - January 2005.